Pre-proposal to Host the International Conference of the System Dynamics Society at Puebla, México in 2007

Working document (7/13/2004)

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to present some basic information about hosting the International Conference of the System Dynamics Society at the Universidad de las Américas in Cholula, México in 2007. Besides presenting the Universidad de las Américas intention to host the Conference, the document answers some of the basic questions included in the electronic document entitled "MajorConcernsLocalContactGuide.xls"

The document is organized in 4 sections. The first section is this introduction. The second section contains a brief description of the host institution and an identification of the local contacts. The third section includes an initial proposal for Conference dates, a description of the host cities, traveling costs and times, and three alternative conference venues with preliminary cost figures. The last section of the document is a brief summary of the offer, in which we try to stress the main advantages of selecting the Universidad de las Américas as the host for the 2007 International Conference of the System Dynamics Society.

About the Local Host

The proposed local host for the 2007 International Conference of the System Dynamics Society is the Universidad de las Américas, Puebla (UDLA) at Cholula, México (http://www.udlap.mx/). UDLA is one of the top-ten private universities in México with a sixty year old tradition of academic experience. The University was founded in México City in 1940, moving to its current location in the early 70's.

UDLA full time faculty numbered 339 (spring 2003). More than 80% of the faculty has obtained their degree from prestigious foreign universities or are internationally well-known Faculty members. The faculty-student ratio is 25 to 1.

UDLA strives for a student population of optimum size and cultural diversity. Total enrollment is approximately 8000 undergraduate and graduate students representing most of the Mexican states and 20 countries. Of this total population, 7205 are undergraduate students and 895 are graduate students.

The University is located in one of the oldest cities in the country. Cholula is a very important archeological site and is located 7200 feet above sea level in a valley surrounded by mountains, with a temperate and sunny climate. It is only five minutes from Puebla and 110 Km from México City. The city of Puebla was founded in 1531, and has been recently designated by UNESCO as a treasure of Colonial Architecture; moreover, it is among the five most important cities of México.

Local coordination of the conference will involve the participation of the faculty in the Business School, particularly the faculty in the Business Administration department. The school has a group of faculty members doing research, teaching and consulting

using systems thinking and system dynamics. The Business School is conformed by 43 full-time faculty (13 of which belong to the business department), and more than 1,000 undergraduate and graduate students. We are exploring the involvement of the Engineering School, particularly the Industrial Engineering department, which also has faculty interested in systems and simulation. If we get the involvement of the Engineering School, the core team in charge of the coordination of the local activities would be integrated by the following full-time faculty:

- Luis F. Luna-Reyes   Business Administration
- Jorge A. Durán-Encalada   Business Administration
- Armando J. López-Sánchez   Accounting and Finance
- Dolores E. Luna-Reyes   Industrial Engineering
- Xóchitl Flores-Mendoza   Industrial Engineering

This core team will work closely to the Program Committee to select the conference theme, define special sessions, etc.

It is important to mention that the Business School has a team of professional staff to support the organization of Conferences and other academic activities. UDLA has a special interest in supporting activities that promote collegiality. Actually, each academic department hosts every year a regional or national conference with an important student involvement. Moreover, the university is interested in hosting and organizing international conferences. The Business School has hosted the International Conference of the Decision Sciences Institute, and it will host next Fall semester the Academy of Marketing Science Conference.

About the Dates, the Host Cities, and the Venue

Proposed Dates

Although the Society's Conference regularly takes place during the last two weeks of July every year, we would like to propose as our first option the second week of July (July 7-12, 2007). The main reason is that our University (our preferred choice for the Conference venue) closes during the last two weeks of July to give preventive maintenance to the buildings and other infrastructure. However, if the Policy Council considers that the Conference must be scheduled during the last two weeks of July, we are considering two other preliminary off-campus venues in the city of Puebla that would be excellent options for the Conference.

The Host Cities

As mentioned above, Cholula and Puebla[1] are two cities rich in archeological treasures and Colonial Architecture. Together, both cities constitute an attractive destination to

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[1]   Some interesting websites with pictures and information about Puebla and Cholula are the following: http://www.ixeh.net/travel/puebla/puebla.html (on-line guide to visitors to the city of Puebla), http://www.geocities.com/sermextr/puebla.htm (a page with some history of Puebla and Cholula), and http://www.mexicoboutiquehotels.com/mexico/destinations/cholula.html or http://www.tourbymexico.com/puebla/cholula/cholula.htm (with some basic information and pictures of Cholula)

visit, providing the opportunity to create an interesting spouse program with different activities every day of the conference.

The easiest way to get to Puebla is flying to the México City International Airport. From Mexico City International Airport, buses depart to Puebla every half hour, with service almost 24 hours a day. The fare is currently 120 pesos (about US$ 12.00). Travel time between Mexico City and Puebla by express bus is 1 hour and 50 minutes. Buses arrive at Puebla's main terminal in the northwest sector of the city or in a stop further south, which is closer to Puebla's Historic District. Any of these bus terminals offer a Taxi service to any place in Puebla or Cholula. Table 1 shows a summary of the current times and costs of traveling from Boston, Brussels, and Seoul to Cholula. The last two columns show the total.

Table 1. Current costs and times to get to Puebla or Cholula from Boston, Brussels, and Seoul (estimates from a local travel agency).

Detail of time and cost / Origin-destination	Airplane from starting city to Mexico City		Bus from Mexico City Airport to Puebla		Taxi from Puebla bus terminal to Cholula		Total	
	Time (hours)	Cost	Time (hours)	Cost	Time (hours)	Cost	Time (hours)	Cost
Boston - Cholula	7.5	$ 449	2	$ 12	0.5	$ 10	10	$ 471
Brussels - Cholula	14	$ 894	2	$ 12	0.5	$ 10	16.5	$ 916
Seoul - Cholula	26	$ 1,441	2	$ 12	0.5	$ 10	28.5	$ 1,463

The Alternative Venues

Our preliminary research points out three alternative venues for the 2007 Conference. Our preferred option is to host the Conference at the UDLA campus during the second week of July, but we are considering two alternative venues that can be used during the last weeks of July, the Fiesta Inn Hotel, and Puebla Conventions Center.

UDLA Campus

Our university campus is conformed by 38 buildings in 73.2 hectare (about 181 acres), including a faculty residential area (see Figure 1). The university colonial-style buildings and gardens have Internet access through an Ethernet and a wireless networks.

Participants can stay at the university's residential colleges (buildings CB, CG, CL, and CM in Figure 1) total 1,748 beds arranged in single and double rooms in suites for 10 to 12 people. Each suite has a common area with kitchen, microwave, refrigerator, washer and dryer. People in the same suite share the bathroom and the showers. We can also arrange for accommodations and transportation for participants who prefer to stay in a local hotel. Parking at the university campus is free (all areas marked with E in Figure 1).

The university offers food services through a cafeteria and two dining rooms (buildings CE, and AG in the figure). UDLA's food services are certified with the "H" Distinctive. The "H" Distinctive is a national certification program to hotels, industrial restaurants, cafeterias, and dining rooms who fulfill the standards of quality and conditions of security that the national and foreign consumers in the handling of foods demand.

The university buildings hold rooms for the Conference sessions, as well as open and closed areas for posters, exhibitors and coffee breaks. Plenary sessions can be held at the university auditorium (building AU in Figure 1), and we will get the best rooms in the University for the parallel sessions and workshops. The main dining room is a nice place for the Conference Banquet.
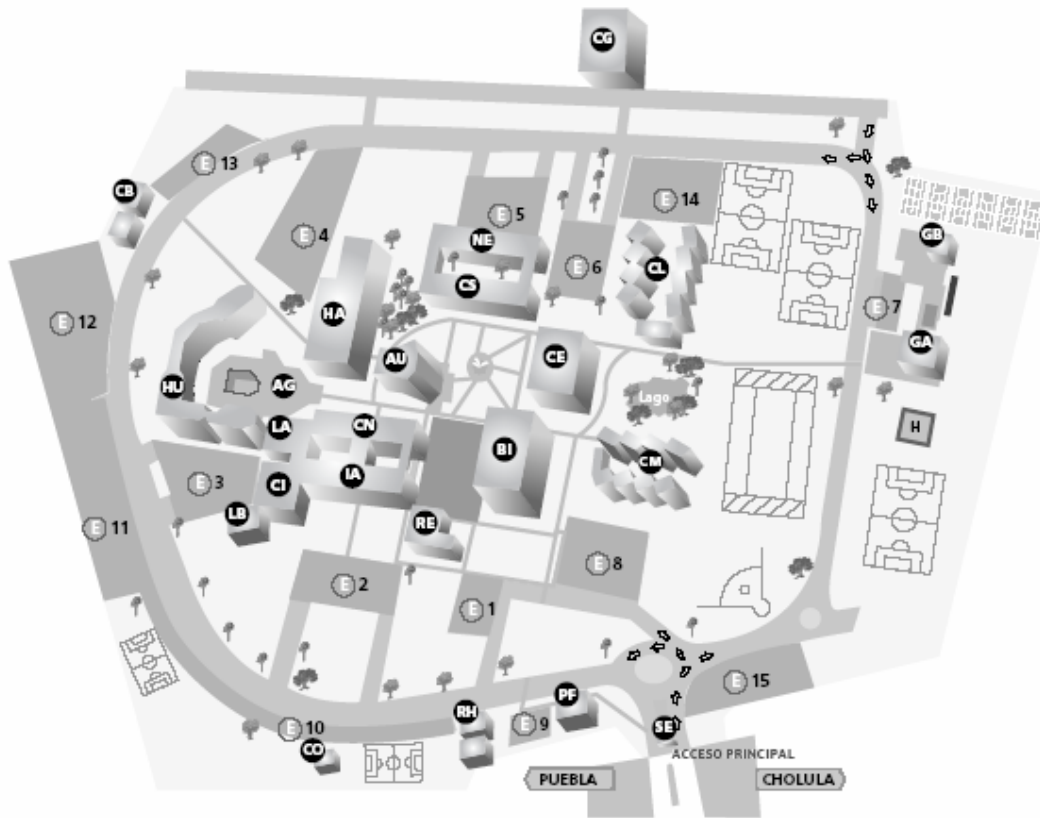

Figure 1. UDLA campus map.

Logistics of any event at the University are supported by the University´s Special Events Department. The Special Events staff gives support to more than 900 events per year (including single presentations, book fairs, panels, symposia, the university commencement, and academic conferences). About 40 of these events are regional, national, and international conferences.

Both the Special Events Department and the Business School have several contacts with local organizations that have been sponsors of Conferences or other events at the University. We can work with the program committee to find sponsors for Conference Materials and Supplies. There is no problem in providing the basic office supplies, and photocopies traditionally provided by the local host.

The use of the university buildings has no financial cost for the Society independently of the choice of accommodations or food services. The university usually hosts this kind of events on exchange of being recognized as conference host or sponsor. The AV equipment of the university is also available for Conference use at no cost, but we may need to rent additional projection equipment for about 4 parallel rooms.

Some preliminary costs of meals, accommodations, and coffee breaks are listed on Table 2. It is possible to make a contract with the University that includes accommodation and meals. The Residential Colleges administration also suggested the possibility of including some basic kitchen supplies and groceries for each suite at an additional cost.

Table 2. Preliminary costs for the 2007 ISDC at UDLA(current prices converted into us dollars)

Item	Cost	Notes
Banquet	$ 26.46	Per person. Taxes and service fee included. Includes wine.
Morning and afternoon Coffee breaks	$ 11.46	Per person, includes coffee, refreshments, fruit, cookies and orange juice. Taxes and service fee included.
Cocktail/reception	$ 7.85	Per person. Taxes and service fee included. Canapes and wine.

Accomodations and meals		
Fiesta Americana Hotel	$ 76.05	Per person, per night, sharing a double room, taxes included.
UDLA Residential Colleges 1	$ 27.78	Per person, per night, in a suite with individual or double bedrooms, taxes included.
UDLA Residential Colleges 2	$ 19.84	Discount rate for students and low-income participants
Meals per day	$ 35.27	Breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the University facilities

Fiesta Inn Hotel

Fiesta Inn hotel is a 4-stars hotel with conference center located at Puebla. The conference center has the capacity to be the venue for the Conference. The hotel is located beside a shopping mall. Due the excellent location of the hotel, is easy to go across the City. The hotel has 150 rooms. In order to accommodate all Conference participants, some of them will need to stay in the Fiesta Americana Hotel (a 5-stars hotel from the same hotel group located about 15 minutes of the Fiesta Inn hotel). Accommodations at the Fiesta Americana hotel (153 rooms) will include transportation to the Fiesta Inn Hotel.

The hotel provides the rooms needed for the Conference, but we need to arrange for AV equipment with an external contractor. Conference rooms are free of charge if Conference participants use at least 35 rooms in the hotel, and we contract with them coffee break services. We can also offer a banquet at the hotel facilities. Fiesta Inn and Fiesta Americana hotels currently offers a courtesy room for every 30 rooms paid by Conference participants, and a courtesy cocktail at registration.

Both hotels rooms count with count with amenities and facilities such as air conditioning, cable/satellite TV, telephone, internet access in room, telephone, coffee maker, etc. Hotel facilities include fitness center, bar, covered parking (about $ 2 us per day), elevators, lounge, non-smoking rooms available, pool, restaurants & coffee shops. They also offer regular services as express check-out, concierge, laundry, 24-hour room service and front desk, vending machines, etc.

Preliminary costs at the Fiesta Inn and Fiesta Americana hotels are listed in Table 3. Students and low-income participants can stay at the Residential Colleges at UDLA. This area does not close during the 2-weeks period as the rest of the university.

Table 3. Preliminary costs for the 2007 ISDC at Fiesta Inn (current prices converted into us dollars)

Item	Cost	Notes
Banquet	$ 22.93	Per person. Taxes and service fee included. Does not include wine
Morning and afternoon Coffee breaks	$ 17.20	Per person, includes coffee, refreshments, fruit, cookies and orange juice. Taxes and service fee included.

Accomodations and meals		
Fiesta Americana	$ 76.05	Per person, per night, sharing a double room, taxes included.
Fiesta Inn	$ 67.28	Per person, per night, sharing a double room, taxes included.
UDLA Residential Colleges 2	$ 19.84	Per person, per night, in a suite with individual or double bedrooms, taxes included. Discount rate for students and low-income participants
Meals per day	$ 50.56	Breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the Fiesta Inn Hotel. Taxes and tip included

Puebla Conventions Center

The third venue alternative is the City of Puebla Conventions Center (http://www.convenciones-puebla.com.mx/), which is located in the City's Historic District. If we decide for this alternative, participants would stay in one or more of the Hotels in the Historic District. Most of them have special price arrangements for events hosted by the Conventions Center. Prices for a double room in the Historic District range from $ 80 to $ 160 usd (People sharing rooms would pay half of that estimate). Besides the conference facilities, the Conventions Center has a Bar, restaurant, business Center and Coffee shop.

The budget of the conventions center is detailed in Table 4. Costs are preliminary, and in order to get fixed, we need to pay 25% of the total amount for the Conference rooms, and sign a contract with the Center. The total amount needs to be paid a month before the Conference.

Table 4. Preliminary budget from the Puebla´s Conventions Center

Item	Cost	Notes
Conference Rooms	$ 19,819.12	Needed spaces and business center services from Saturday to Sunday (taxes included)
Morning and afternoon Coffee breaks	$ 11.99	Includes coffee, water, tea, soda and cookies (taxes and service included)
AV Equipment	$ 11,019.51	AV needs for the rooms during the conference (taxes included)

Students and low-income participants can stay at the University residential colleges, and we can arrange for a low-cost transportation from Cholula to Puebla's Historic District (about a 30 minutes drive).

In summary

The Universidad de las Américas Business School is interested in hosting the 2007 International Conference of the System Dynamics Society. The University campus constitutes a unique venue for the Conference, offering conference facilities, as well as accommodation and food services for Conference participants at a very reasonable cost. The support staff of UDLA has a lot of experience organizing academic conferences, and the university community is interested in participating in collegiate events such as the ISDC.

The University location offers an opportunity to create a very attractive spouse's program, and we are very flexible to create the best mix of services to satisfy all conference participants in coordination with the program committee.

Faculty and administrative staff involved in the organization of the Conference are willing to make the Conference a pleasant experience for all participants, and to look for local sponsors and make all the arrangements for the Conference. The Business School is willing to provide the office supplies and photocopies needed for the Conference office. Besides the group of volunteers, the School has professional staff to support logistics such as the registration process.

Please, do not hesitate to contact us for any question of additional information.

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